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LIVING COMMUNITY

April 2012

Dear Friends,

When the last edition of Living Community reached you the Community for a Better World had barely begun their new journey, without the certainties and security of having Fr Michael Fallon, Jill Gibbs and Sr Tess Connolly very ably working full-time and without the National Centre in Morisset.

As we go on, I often think of Fr. Lombardi's wisdom in insisting that Provisionality is fundamental to our way of being, as we draw on the diverse gifts and service of all our members, all part-time and dispersed between Queensland, Victoria and New Zealand. I thank all concerned for their continued patience, support and never-failing encouragement and humility as we learn to live and share this new form of co-responsibility. Following a Cenacle decision by Australia and Papua new Guinea to work more closely with each other, we will welcome Sr. Bernadette Serea to our National Convivenza in July, while Fr Kevin McIntosh (Area Coordinator) and I hope to attend the PNG National Convivenza in August. We are also happy to welcome South Korea to Oceania and hope to develop a strong relationship over time.

Our work continues. Jill and Michael have completed *Journey Together in Faith*, with publication expected by September. In March the group presented Spirituality for our Times to the parishioners of the Hawke's Bay area of New Zealand. The retreat was well-received, revealing yet again how people hunger and thirst for a communitarian spirituality. However, few would have guessed that within a couple of days of Fr Michael's return to Australia, he would undergo major heart surgery, from which he is recovering well. Thank God.

Our future will consist of our continued contemplative reading of the Signs of the Times. For as we know full well, our faith consists of trusting in God's wisdom, and our hope lies in trusting the power of God to bring about His dream for the world. We pray for the many gifts of the Holy Spirit and ask that we might witness their many fruits as we continue our service of the Reign of God. Thank you for your ongoing prayer and support.

Love and Peace

Margaret Green
Director,
CBW, Australia

NEWS FROM OCEANIA



AREA NEWS

At the Cenacle in Rome in September 2011, there were four of us taking part from Oceania: Gilles Cote and Roger Purcell from PNG and Margaret Green and myself from Australia. While there, the four of us decided I become the new area coordinator of Oceania. Later, the General Direction ratified our decision.

In January, Fr. Joseph Cho, National Director of the South Korean Group asked if their PG could move from the Asia Area and be included in the Oceania Area. The Koreans have had much contact with our heavenly member Jill Gibbs. Jill had travelled to their country on a number of occasions giving programs and retreats even to the priests. Their national secretary Teresa Kim was with us at the recent Cenacle. The Korean PG is the largest of our three national PG's including many laity.

After my consulting Roger, Gilles, Margaret and Michael, we agreed to their request to join our Area. The General Direction ratified our decision on 27 February. Consequently, the Oceania Area now covers three diverse nations which will be enriching to us all, though not without its challenges especially the distances between our three countries. At our Australian national convivenza in July, we will be happy to welcome Sr. Bernadette Serea SND of the PNG National Team.

Kevin McIntosh
Area Coordinator

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The renewal of the Church in PNG/SI is moving ahead in many dioceses according to different methods and programmes, moving in different phases and stages, with different speed of progress according to the situation of each diocese. The National Team has been involved in the facilitation of a number of activities in different places.

The Diocese of Daru-Kiunga conducted an Analysis and Diagnosis Workshop in March 15-24 as part of their renewal programme which is moving from Stage 1 (began in 2000) to Stage 2. This involved a complete new analysis and diagnosis after 15 years since the original. It occasioned a new and deeper appreciation of the reality of the diocese.

The Diocese of Auki (Malaita Island) in the Solomon Islands, which is part of the Catholic Bishops Conference, on March 5-9, conducted a Pastoral Planning Assembly, in which the first Diocesan Pastoral Plan was presented, discussed, adjusted and approved. Attending were Bishop Chris Cadone and all the priests, with lay representatives from all the Parishes. It was held at Buma Pastoral Centre with about 80 participants who worked very hard to understand the situation of the Diocese and plan the way forward.

From Auki and Gizo Dioceses in the Solomon Islands there are few people who are interested in becoming members of CAS. They are all involved in the Renewal of their dioceses and have been given some introduction to CAS. We are seeking ways to give them formation "from a distance" as travel is very expensive and time-consuming

The Diocese of Goroka began their efforts of planning after the General Assembly in 2006 and the introduction of National Pastoral Plan. The Goroka Diocesan Pastoral Plan was launched in 2008 with Diocesan Assemblies twice each year to evaluate and plan further. It has been a slow gradual process with a growing understanding of the need for Pastoral Planning, and the methods necessary. Although Goroka is not part of the PRD we have been asked to facilitate in 2010 and again this year.

The Daughters of Mary Immaculate (FMI) based in Rabaul are in the process of a renewal programme for Religious Life, which is facilitated by the Movement for a Better World. We conducted a retreat on the spirituality of communion for all the Sisters with retreats last year in Banz and Port Moresby, and this year in Rabaul and Kimbe. More recently we went to Rabaul to conduct a 3-day workshop with the Sisters in preparation for the next step of their renewal. The Sisters' Animation Team attended the workshop to prepare the materials and letters necessary for this step. They are scattered all over PNG with communication slow and difficult, and with the Sisters fully involved in busy apostolates.

At the National level we now have an Extended National Team which meets twice each year for a week and which is of great assistance to the full time Team. We are also planning a training programme for Formators for each of the Local Teams; this begins in May with training in the next 4 years.

Fr Roger Purcell msc
Director CAS Papua New Guinea

AUSTRALIA

Victoria

In August 2011 the Parishes of Ararat, Greensborough and Sunbury gathered for 2 days of reflection and sharing at Sunbury. We were fortunate to have both Michael and Margaret with us.

Friendships renewed and stories shared, we settled under the guidance of Michael who led us through an exercise in the spirituality of communion – "Going to communion" a personal and Parish journey of growth. He spoke of the parts of the Eucharist and in the sharing, the implications and responsibilities of both each participant and Parish. We were able to share an entertaining meal together before retiring to gather again early the next morning.

Michael finalised "Going to communion" by emphasizing the purpose of Eucharist as an encounter with the living Jesus in a sacramental action, experiencing his life-giving and saving action in the celebration and the opportunity for each one of us to transform, more deeply, as a member of the Body of Christ.

Lunch presented an opportunity for Parishes to share their experiences of the CBW project. It was evident that the Ararat Parish is very different to Sunbury and Greensborough. Ararat, being a rural Parish, covers a vast area. It has a correction centre which will be expanding in the near future, offering employment opportunities and pastoral challenges. Michael was heading to Ararat to lead the Parish in discerning a new direction for Parish Coordinating Team / Pastoral Council. Sunbury and Greensborough are able to deliver their Evangelising letters by hand and attempt to provide pastoral support within their Parish zones/neighbourhoods. Michael and Margaret were able to support Sunbury in their preparation for an upcoming Parish Assembly.

The fact that Parishes vary geographically, socio-economically and have such different dynamics, we realise the benefit of the Parish Analysis and Diagnosis and Target, for the success of the CBW project. As Parishes grow and change, how often would there be a need to repeat the Analysis and Diagnosis and reset the Target?

All teams have been so very grateful for the input that Jill provided and the Evangelising letters, which will continue throughout 2012.

The project and our Parishes have been privileged and blessed to have had Jill working tirelessly, she is sadly missed.

RIP Jill Gibbs

Lyn Plummer
Sunbury

The aim of the Community for a Better World is to invite all people in the area or parish to grow in their relationship with Christ and to deepen their understanding of what is meant by Church as communion. People here in Sunbury are invited to join a neighbourhood group which meets at regular intervals to pray and discuss issues that are important to the members and the growth of the Church. The coordinator feeds current issues to be discussed and prayed about.

The group can help people to grow in friendship with those about them and to realise that in becoming part of a small group we learn that differences can be integrated in unity. Personally and together we learn God's ways and we become wiser, stronger and more loving. A number of parishes around Victoria have seen value in every person having an opportunity to discuss issues that touch them and so have introduced Community for a Better World into their parishes.

**Maureen Cullen
Victoria CBW group**

Brisbane

The Brisbane team gathered for the February Convivenza on the week-end of 4th – 5th February. It was our first opportunity to gather together as group since Jill's death. We began by looking at the past six months and the changes and challenges we had faced.

With those thoughts and an optimistic (realistic) outlook we prioritised our activities for the coming six months. It was a peaceful and productive time with constructive outcomes.

CBW Brisbane

LIVING THE CHURCH TODAY FOR A BETTER WORLD HAWKE'S BAY PASTORAL AREA, NZ

Spirituality for Our Times (SfOT) is a shared experience of God, of Church, and of world. It is an experience of coming together as the community of believers, open to the gift of salvation that God offers, a community of sisters and brothers united in Christ. The Hawke's Bay Pastoral Area in NZ comprises 9 parishes, ranging from Central Hawke's Bay, 4 parishes in and around Hastings, 3 parishes in Napier and Wairoa. A desire for formation and to create a Pastoral plan for the areas prompted the suggestion of Spirituality for Our Times as a starting point. The retreat was held during 7th to 14th March 2012. Fr. Michael Fallon and Margaret Green along with Mary Fama gave the retreat. NZ parishes had not previously be exposed to SfOT. The presence of many people, some coming from a distance and their participation during the retreat showed a group ready to experience SfOT. Participants were very receptive to the input and they appreciated every opportunity to share with each other. It showed their readiness for a communitarian spirituality. Many participants expressed their

experience to the team giving the retreat and expressed the wish for more opportunities for similar retreats. Some thoughts from participants:

"As a rather new member of the RC Church I was delighted to hear (and experience) more of the Church in Action. Particularly I have valued finding out more about the God-given, earth-shattering event that was Vatican II."

"Provided a forum for new and old concepts of faith to be considered in a new light."

No retreat such as this can be undertaken without the efforts of many "behind the scenes" people. The team wishes to express their sincere appreciation to Priests, pastoral workers, school staff and many parishioners who assisted in the smooth operation of the retreat over two different sites.

INSIGHTS of Fr. LOMBARDI

There must be creativity - a great deal of creativity - in new methods of action for this is in short supply in the Church. Let them never be satisfied with the good which is already found in the Church and in mankind, nor with the good we ourselves perform. We are born from this blood and must nourish ourselves on this spirit.

**Fr Lombardi
Taken by the Spirit**

Features of a Spirituality of Communion

Part 3: Participation (its biblical basis)

I introduced the ideas of 'participation' and 'co-responsibility' in my previous article for "Living Community." Because they are important features of communitarian spirituality, I should like to explore these ideas a little further.

In the early years of Christianity, in the Greek-speaking world, the Christian community was called an "ekklesia." The word actually occurs only three times in our Gospels (once in Matthew 16 and twice in Matthew 18). But Paul, the earliest of the New Testament writers, uses the term constantly. In the secular sphere, the word "ekklesia" indicated a gathering of all the citizens. It was the gathering or assembly of all those who had the right to participate in decision-making on issues affecting people's welfare.

In the earliest letter we have from his hand, 1 Thessalonians, written about the year 50, just twenty years after the death of Jesus, Paul was already addressing the Christians of Thessalonika as the "church (ekklesia) of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:1). Obviously, what makes this assembly different from the "ekklesia" of the city is its relationship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is "in them", that is, in communion with them.

While the reference to the Father and Jesus Christ is critical for defining the Church as the mystery of communion, aspects of this are already implied by the term "ekklesia" itself. It assumes a gathering or assembly in which all members have a participative role. Being a member of the community meant being an active member: This was taken for granted. And in all his subsequent letters, Paul always addresses himself to the particular "ekklesia" as a whole, not its leaders, recognizing that the participation of its members is part of the very nature of Christian community.

As well as the term and the idea of "ekklesia", Paul also took from the Greco-Roman world the idea of "body" which was one of the words used to describe the city. As we have seen, this image for the church suited him well to illustrate the idea of co-responsibility. The Church is the Body of Christ and all its members (like the members of the human body) are dependent on one another, responsible for one another, and contribute –each in its own way – to the health and growth of the body. We find this image most

fully developed in 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 to 14.

In these chapters, Paul stresses the various gifts which belong to the different members, gifts that the Spirit has distributed among all. The result of this, Paul says, is that no member of the Body of Christ is without a gift, nor does anyone possess all the gifts. And the diversely distributed gifts are not just for the benefit or growth of the individuals who possess them, but are to be used in the service of all, and under the direction of the Spirit, for the growth of the whole body or Church. The Holy Spirit is thus the basis of this participation and co-responsibility in the "ekklesia" of God, the body of Christ. It is not of human origin. Indeed the Spirit is the principal of this diversity, which is itself a gift: A diversity which is meant to promote and enrich the ideals of unity and community.

Thus did St. Paul brilliantly make use of realities already known and accepted in the civic life of the Greco-Roman world, and, by emphasizing the decisive role of the Holy Spirit, along with "God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," use them to illustrate the true nature of the Church. And our reading of his letters and the Acts of the Apostles reveals that the practice of the Church in the early years reflected this understanding of its nature and constitution. We see men and women participating in pastoral and missionary work. Leadership was one of the gifts dispensed by the Spirit to some, and it was an important one, but it was one among many.

But as time passed, the process began which saw the centralizing of the many activities and ministries in the hands of a few; indeed, a recognition of the many gifts as belonging to the few. The Church came to be structured in a way that saw its members divided into a, rulers and subjects, teachers and taught, active and passive.

Without denying in any way the important and necessary charism of leadership, there is a need for the Church to discover the real soul of the way it saw itself and functioned, and was seen by others, in those years when the faith was new and exciting and revolutionary, with the different gifts and ministers and activities co-ordinated by the Spirit in the service of the common good. Vatican II went some way to re-capturing that vision, but there is still a way to go.

(This article is based on the CBW resource, Exploring the Spirituality of Communion, session 4: Participation and Co-Responsibility).